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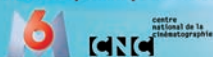


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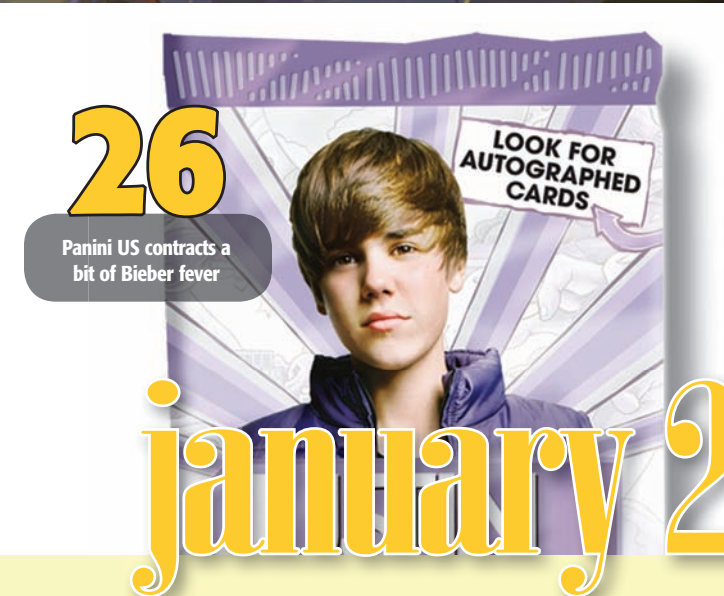
20

Technicolor sets sights on original productions



42

Choose your own adventure—with stickers



26

Panini US contracts a bit of Bieber fever



29

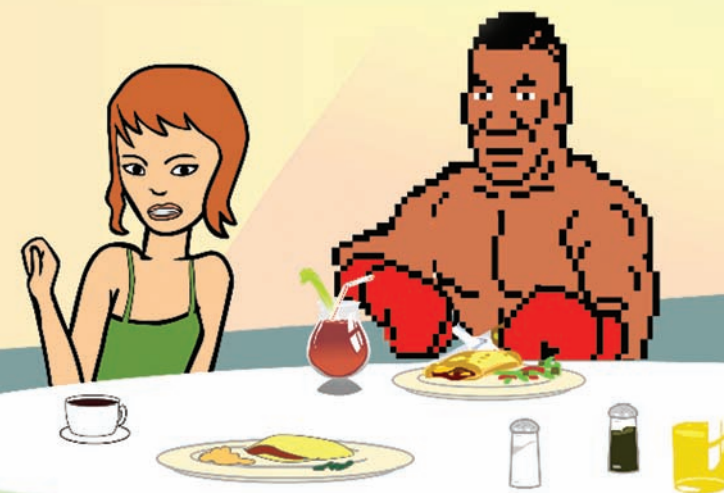
Fashion-savvy site lets girls design real-world wear

january 2011

## Special Report

### 31 Self-starters.com

A look at the gatekeeper-free world of webtoon creation—*KidScreen's* exclusive excerpt from David B. Levy's latest book, *Directing Animation*.



## Highlights from this issue...

### 15 Up Front

Toys 'R' Us, Fox ramp up for *Rio* retail exclusive

### 27 Kid Insight

Nick looks at how kids choose video games

### 19 TV

Phase 4 fuels growth in DVD biz with kids content

### 28 Interactive

BinWeevils brings social networking to VOD

### 24 Consumer Products

Kung Zhu line lends boy cred to Zhu Zhu Pets

### 42 iSpy

It's an iPhone, no it's a plush! Nah, it's a Woogie!

## back of the book

38 Industry Events

40 People on the Move

**Cover** Our editorial cover features an image of Blu, Jewel and the gang from Fox's upcoming animated 3-D film *Rio*, while international and event copies sport an ad for eOne Family's *Peppa Pig*.





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# FAVORITE THINGS...

**R**aindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens are some of the favorite things that Julie Andrews trilled on about in that holiday classic *The Sound of Music*, and as I sit here writing this just a week or so before Christmas Day—admittedly a little preoccupied by the fact that I still have to brave the mall-going hoards—I'm thinking about what I like most about this industry and this job, by association. (Don't worry, I'm not about to don a dirndl and start caterwauling whilst perched upon a mountaintop.)

It turns out, it's not really so much the mundane comfort provided by the children's entertainment equivalent of brown paper packages tied up with string (uh, quaffing rosé in Cannes, perhaps?), but has more to do with the fact that things are always moving forward and breaking new ground. With an audience and consumer group that changes every few years, broadcasters, producers and product creators have no choice but innovate and shake up their approach—each successive generation of kids demands it.

And we're in the throes of the next big shake-up right now with the entrée of the iPad and related tablet devices. It turns out toddlers are not intimidated by touch-screen technology and are learning rather quickly how to use their parents' "toy." Beyond the flood of picture-book and kid-friendly apps that's set to deluge iTunes stores around the world, you have to wonder what this will mean for the industry a few years down the road when those industrious three-year-olds are ready to enter middle school. What will their expectations of entertainment be like by then? Well, that's where you folks come in, and it's also my favorite part—documenting that pending sea change.

As for my other favorite things, I guess warm woolen mittens, which help insulate me from the snowflakes that stay on my nose and eyelashes (I do live in Canada, eh?) rank pretty highly on the list. Or at least these ones do!



Cheers,  
Lana

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# KIDSCREEN OVER & ABOUT



## CHANGE IS COMING...

After 15 years of informing and engaging you as you meet the challenge of entertaining children around the world, we're starting to feel our age a bit. And rather than tinker here and there, we're in the process of finishing up a wholesale makeover of our brand that you will start to see on all of our products very soon. It's been a fascinating process that has helped us define how KidScreen is perceived—by us, by our regular readers, and by folks looking at us for the first time—as well as what KidScreen means in the circles it travels in. We've worked really hard to make sure that meaning resonates in every aspect of the rebrand, and we hope you like it when you see it.

Keep an eye out for a whole new era of KidScreen that will kick off with your February/March issue and a relaunch of both Kidscreen.com KidScreen Daily in time for the Summit. And if you're joining us in New York for the year's biggest gathering of kids entertainment professionals, come help us celebrate our past and embrace our future at Tuesday night's Kick-Off Cocktail in the Delegates Lounge. We promise it will be very...revealing!

## UPCOMING ADVERTISING OPPORTUNITIES

### Nelvana turns 40, KidScreen celebrates!

Our April issue will mark a pretty amazing milestone for one of the industry's biggest and most prolific production companies. Nelvana is celebrating 40 years of creativity and collaboration in 2011, and KidScreen is exploring its impressive corporate history with an exclusive anniversary tribute.

Be among the first to congratulate this strong leader in the kids entertainment business—advertising space is on sale now!

### iKids—Make you mark in the world of apps

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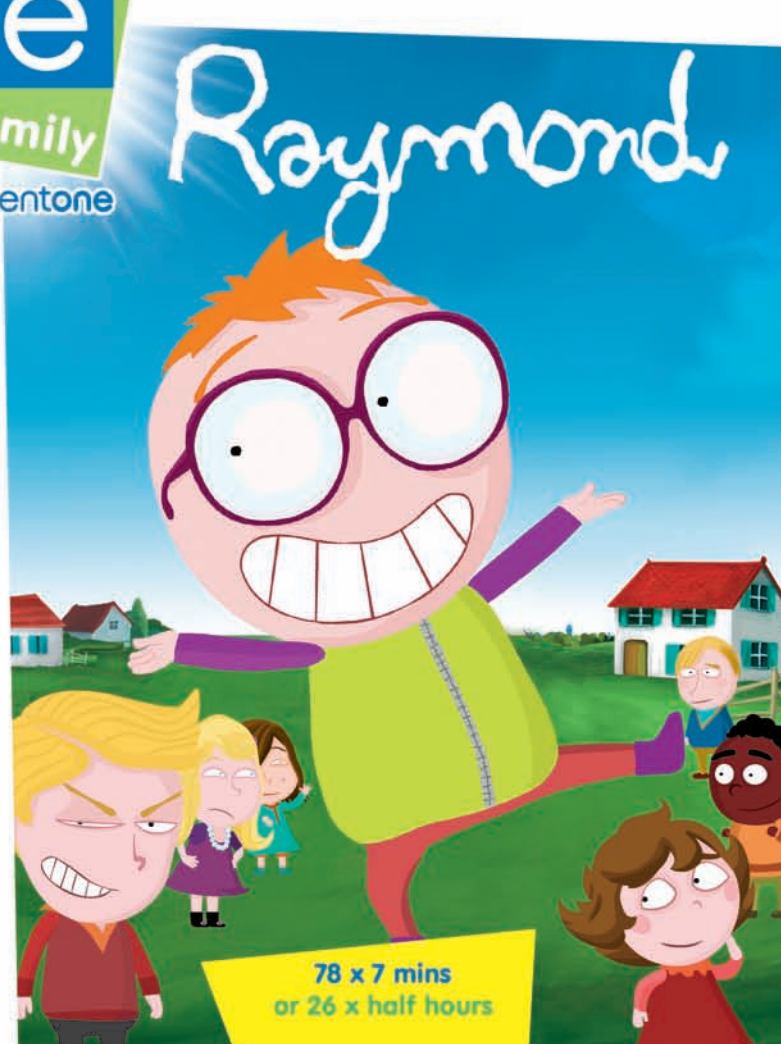
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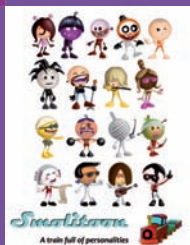


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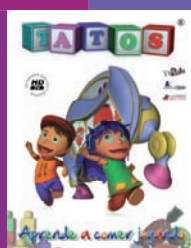
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# RIO'S RETAIL RAMP-UP

**Fox's new 3-D film lands a nationwide exclusive at Toys 'R' Us**

by gary rusak



**T**wentieth Century Fox is looking to make 2011 *Rio*'s year. With an eye towards transforming consumer products based on the upcoming 3-D animated big-screen flick into perennial performers at retail, the studio's L&M division is partnering with Toys 'R' Us for a wide-reaching exclusive that will make the retailer the US destination for all things *Rio*.

"We talked to many retailers and Toys 'R' Us was very excited about it," says Robert Marick, EVP of Twentieth Century Fox Consumer Products. "Seeing someone's passion, to me, is the most important thing. Toys 'R' Us was passionate about the program."

Making the initial product line exclusive to the Wayne, New Jersey-based retailer is Fox's first move in making *Rio* stand apart from the crowd, including established movie franchises like *Cars*, against which this original property will be competing this year.

"We wanted to make a statement," says Marick, explaining why the studio felt that finding an exclusive retail home was the right tack to take for the program. "In today's environment, everyone has different priorities and sometimes your lines can get lost in the shuffle. With our partnership we knew we could deliver an impressive statement at retail."

The program at TRU, targeting boys and girls ages three to six, will roll into the chain's 840 US stores a few weeks before the movie, about a rare Rio de Janeiro-bound bird named Blu, opens wide on April 8, 2011. The timing is important, as the products will be in stores before the crucial Easter period and the promo is slated to run throughout Q2 and into the DVD window that will lead into the 2011 holiday season. And to make a splash, TRU is showcasing *Rio* in a three-foot endcap with "all the bells and whistles," including sound buttons, LCD monitors and a colorful array of goods.

While *Rio*'s licensee list is full of established names in the industry, including THQ (videogames), HarperCollins (publishing),

JEM Sportswear (apparel) and Awake (apparel), Marick says the studio is always looking for additional partners. But, because of the evolving nature of the deals, he was hesitant to say what categories were still up for grabs at press time.

The flagship line, meanwhile, is being handled by L.A.-based ToyQuest, the company that managed the master toy programs for DreamWorks' *Monsters vs Aliens* and *Megamind*.

"Our goal was to capture the essence of the Brazilian setting with our toy line," says Peter Magalhaes, VP of business development at ToyQuest. "We concentrated on flight and color. There is extra articulation in the figurines and the talking plush really captures the personalities from the movie."

ToyQuest has developed a line of three-inch collectible figurines, six-inch beanies, standard plush, and talking plush that uses select character audio files from the movie. Pricing for the range has yet to be nailed down, but it should fall in line with industry norms.

Fox's high hopes for the franchise are based largely upon the CV of *Rio*'s director Carlos Saldanha, a native of Brazil, and the man who co-directed the original *Ice Age* and directed its sequel. (The *Ice Age* franchise has generated more than US\$1 billion at retail worldwide over the past decade.) And with the voice talents of big stars like Anne Hathaway, Tracy Morgan and George Lopez, along with a soundtrack that features Black Eyed Peas lead Will.i.am and Bossa Nova pioneer Sergio Mendes, Fox feels *Rio* has the stuff to make the same kind of magic.

"The movie is an immersive experience," says Marick, discussing how the brand-new IP will differentiate itself in a marketplace full of established and perennial favorites. "It has a unique flavor—with the imagery, the songs and the dance—and it will stand out. And we have a retailer that has really embraced it." **N**

## LINKS

• Rio >

[www.rio-themovie.com](http://www.rio-themovie.com)

• Twentieth Century Fox > [www.foxmovies.com](http://www.foxmovies.com)



## KidScreen AWARDS

# CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS YEAR'S 38 OUTSTANDING NOMINEES!



### Preschool Category—Best Animated Series

Dinosaur Train (entered by The Jim Henson Company)  
Pink Panther and Pals (entered by MGM Television and Rubicon Entertainment)  
Uki (entered by Universal Music II)

### Preschool Category—Best Non-Animated or Mixed Series

In the Night Garden (entered by Ragdoll Productions)  
Sesame Street (entered by Sesame Workshop)  
Yo Gabba Gabba! (entered by Wildbrain)

### Preschool Category—Best One-Off, Special or TV Movie

Ble Mae Cyw? (entered by S4C)  
The Adventures of Charlotte and Henry (entered by Optimistic Pictures)

### Preschool Category—Best Companion Website

Driver Dan's Story Train (entered by TwoFour54)  
SesameStreet.org (entered by Sesame Workshop)  
ZingZillas: The Big Coconut Adventure (entered by Plug-In Media)

### Kids Category—Best Animated Series

Hero 108 (entered by Moonscoop)  
Pink Panther and Pals (entered by MGM Television and Rubicon Entertainment)  
Shaun the Sheep (entered by the BBC)

### Kids Category—Best Non-Animated or Mixed Series

Deadly 60 (entered by the BBC)  
Dino Dan (entered by Sinking Ship Entertainment)  
Horrible Histories (entered by the BBC)

### Kids Category—Best Companion Website

Fizzy's Lunch Lab (entered by Cloudkid)  
Horrible Histories (entered by the BBC)  
Phineas & Ferb (entered by Disney Interactive)





The 2011 KidScreen Awards shortlist is in. These contestants lead the pack across 13 categories that celebrate excellence in international children's programming in preschool, kids, tweens/teens and family demos. The second round of judging, taking place at press time, includes input from industry experts and kids and parents from around the world, who are being asked to name their favorites. Winners will be announced during the KidScreen Awards ceremony, being held on Thursday, February 17 at the Hilton New York as part of KidScreen Summit (February 15 to 18).



### **Tweens/Tweens Category—Best Animated Series**

The Dukes of Broxtonia (entered by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation)  
Teen Days (entered by Cartoon One)  
Total Drama World Tour (entered by Fresh TV)

### **Tweens/Tweens Category—Best Non-Animated or Mixed Series**

How to be Indie (entered by Heroic TV)  
Survive This: Season 2 (entered by 9 Story Entertainment)  
The Next Star III (entered by Tricon Films & Television)

### **Tweens/Tweens Category—Best Companion Website**

Dance Academy (entered by Werner Film Productions)  
Design Squad (entered by WGBH)  
The Baxter Online Experience (entered by Smokebomb Entertainment)

### **Family Category—Best Animated Series**

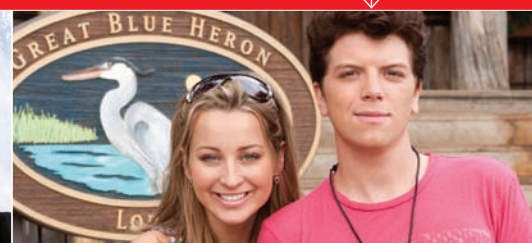
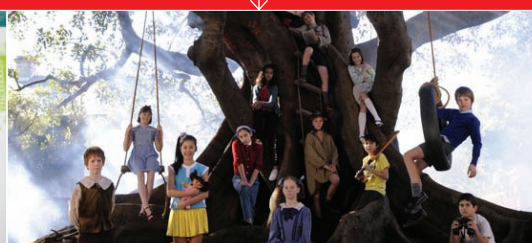
Kaeloo (entered by Cube Creative Productions)  
Bun&Bunee (entered by Bun&Bunee)  
Horace in Slow Motion (entered by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation)

### **Family Category—Best Non-Animated or Mixed Series**

My Place (entered by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation)  
Kaitangata Twitch (entered by ProductionsHed.TV)  
The Next Star III (entered by Tricon Films & Television)

### **Family Category—Best One-Off, Special or TV Movie**

Vacation With Derek (entered by Shaftesbury Films)  
Harriet the Spy: Blog Wars (entered by 9 Story Entertainment)  
When Families Grieve (entered by Sesame Workshop)





# Scholastic shortlists top kids publishing trends in 2010

It's the job of Scholastic's editors to track trends in the ever-changing children's publishing scene. See what made their top-10 list over the past 12 months.

## 1. The expanding Young Adult (YA) audience

More and more adults are reading YA books. The runaway success of YA series by J.K. Rowling (*Harry Potter*) and Stephenie Meyer (*Twilight*) are just two of the biggest examples.

## 2. The year of dystopian fiction

With bestselling series like *The Hunger Games* (Scholastic) and *The Maze Runner* (Delacorte Books), teenage readers can't seem to get enough of fiction that suggests the future may be worse than the present.

## 3. Mythology-based fantasy

Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson* series (Hyperion) set the trend, and now series like *The Kane Chronicles* (Hyperion) and *Goddess Girls* (Aladdin) are benefiting.

## 4. Multimedia series

Series like *The 39 Clues* (Scholastic) and *The Search for WondLa* (Simon & Schuster) are hooking readers with stories that go beyond the printed page to meet kids through digital media.

## 5. A focus on popular media characters

Kids love to read books about characters they know and recognize from books, movies and

television shows. Titles built around popular characters, like *Fancy Nancy*, David Shannon's "David" and Buzz and Woody are selling more than ever.

## 6. The shift in picture books

US publishers are producing between 25% and 30% fewer picture book titles than they used to, as some parents now want their kids to read more challenging books at younger ages.

## 7. The return to humor

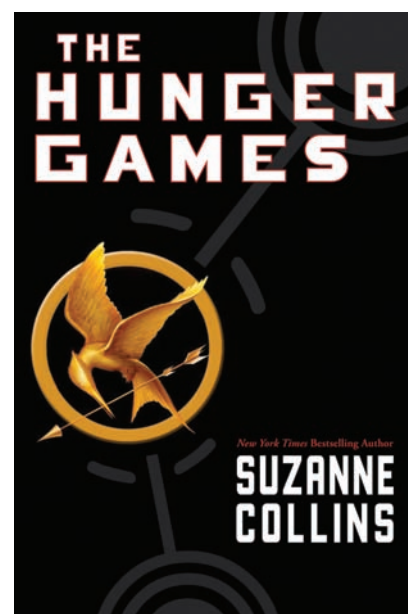
The doom and gloom of the recent recession may be partly responsible for an up-tick in sales in the humor category, led by the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series (Jeff Kinney) and Dav Pilkey's *The Adventures of Ook & Gluk*.

## 8. The rise of the diary and journal format

The *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series also typifies this trend, but its success is helping out popular series such as *Dear Dumb Diary* (Jim Benton), *Dork Diaries* (Rachel Renee Russell) and *The Popularity Papers* (Amy Ignatow).

## 9. Special-needs protagonists

There is a growing body of literary fiction in which the main characters have special



The success of *The Hunger Games* trilogy certainly helped to drive the YA dystopian fiction trend

needs—particularly Aspergers Syndrome and Autism—like those found in *My Brother Charlie* (Scholastic) and *Marcelo in the Real World* (Arthur A. Levine Books).

## 10. Paranormal romance beyond vampires

YA readers continue to fall in love with things that go bump in the night—and not just Edward Cullen. Think zombies, werewolves and witches found in the pages of such titles as *Shiver and Linger* (Scholastic), *Beautiful Creatures* (Little, Brown) and *Immortal* (Katherine Tegen Books). **WGG**

# New study sizes up the US VOD market

According to recent reports from Oregon-based video-on-demand researcher Rentrak and Port Washington, New York's The NPD Group, US VOD users consume more multimedia content, have higher household incomes and are more likely to have children in the house than the general population.

In fact, contends Rentrak research group project manager Jarvis Schuckman, "Kids are the ultimate on-demand consumers. They want to watch what they want and time isn't an issue for them." As such, he says children's content is among the top-three types of programming selected by consumers who have access to VOD services in the US.

In an effort to bring more awareness to advertisers and agencies regarding the growing value of the VOD platform and its consumers, Rentrak and NPD have provided a holistic view of their behavior in the *VOD Consumer Profiles* report for 2010. (Rentrak has also released its *State of VOD Trend Report 2009*,

which covers VOD behavior from 2007 to 2009.) In combining Rentrak's VOD data with NPD's market findings on overall consumer behavior, the reports blend findings from behavioral, usage and consumer profile data to learn how VOD users watch movies and if users purchases more or fewer movies across different formats.

"We've found that free content is the most popular on-demand content out there, and kids content makes up about 25% of all free on-demand orders," says Schuckman, whose team accessed data from 99% of US cable companies offering VOD. And an average of 11 programs are ordered via each VOD-enabled set-top-box in the US every month, which adds up to more than 104 million kids content orders per month. "Kids content is typically one of the top-growing forms of on-demand content that we are seeing," explains Schuckman. "Each year it continues to grow and become more popular." **WGG**



# FUELLING A GROWING FOOTPRINT

by kate calder

**DVD distributor**  
**Phase 4 amps up**  
**acquisition plans**  
**to further expand**  
**US retail biz**

**I**n a market that is inevitably moving from physical media to digital, Toronto, Canada-based home entertainment distributor Phase 4 Films has beefed up its kids and family DVD sales by taking on non-theatrical feature films to sell into its established North American mass-market retail accounts.

The company's been on something of a roll over the past year. In fact, in a sales climate that's in overall decline, Phase 4 increased its Canadian DVD sales by 33% in the first half of 2010.

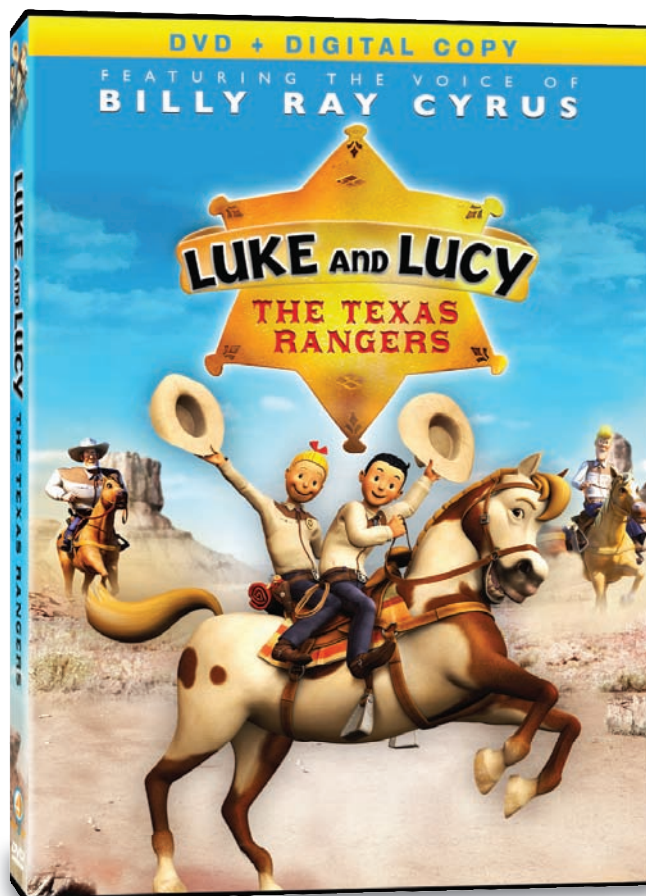
VP of acquisitions Jessica Labi explains that recent moves to leverage its key retail relationships—forged through its feature film/adult TV DVD business—into growing its share of the kids market started to pay off after experiencing sales success with 2008 animated feature *Dragon Hunters*.

Phase 4 acquired the CGI film from French prodco Futurikon that's based on the TV series of the same name and dubbed it into English, using the voice talent of Oscar winner Forrest Whittaker. The company then placed 300,000 reversioned DVD/*Dragon Hunter* comic book combo packs (US\$9.98 each) as a limited-time exclusive offer into Walmart stores in the US in 2009. And since widening distribution to all the big-name North American mass retailers in 2010, Phase 4's sold 700,000 packs to date.

The company is now actively looking to pick up enough kid-friendly features to release one newly acquired title per month.

So in February, the company will launch *Luke and Lucy and the Texas Rangers* on DVD, a Belgian film that was a theatrical success in the Netherlands. In this case, Phase 4 dubbed the CGI feature into English, employing the vocal talents of Billy Ray Cyrus—a.k.a. Hannah Montana's dad. Labi says the extra cost of casting and dubbing is well worth it. "Films that are cast-driven do very well," says Labi, adding that she expects *Luke and Lucy* to be one of the company's biggest animated features in 2011.

"A lot of animated feature films, which are expensive CGI properties, are from foreign countries," says Labi. "And we're looking for high quality, so we often look internationally for really great product." To that end, she's attending KidScreen Summit, MIPTV, MIPCOM and a handful of children's film



Phase 4 added celeb voice cred to its latest imported feature to jump-start sales in the US

festivals to feed the planned monthly release schedule. And Labi is open to receiving submissions in the form of screeners, sell sheets and marketing material, which can be sent to [jlabi@phase4films.com](mailto:jlabi@phase4films.com). (She says all deals are negotiated differently, but many include royalty-based agreements.)

Phase 4 also actively distributes children's properties through its North American mass-market retail accounts and has a multi-year DVD deal with Corus Entertainment's Nelvana Enterprises for existing and upcoming Nelvana IP, including *Franklin* and *Max & Ruby*, and an agreement for DHX Media/RDF's *Waybuloo*. In the case of Nelvana, the DVD license that originally covered just Canada has generated more than 6.5 million unit sales in that country alone. It's since been expanded to include US distribution for the first time. And to keep that pipeline full, Labi says she's on the hunt to pick up US and Canadian DVD rights to more episodic series, especially preschool, as long as they have proven success on air.

Labi says the company is also looking to further expand its North American reach, especially State-side, by placing wholesome, inspirational movies and episodic series in the Christian retail channel. In November, Phase 4 put DVDs of the classic version of *Where the Red Fern Grows* into Walmart, and the title's now selling 10,000 units a month, bringing total sales so far to just shy of 100,000 copies. **N**

## LINKS

Phase 4 Films >

[www.phase4films.com](http://www.phase4films.com)



# Technicolor takes on original toons

For the first time in its 100-year history, international production services and distribution firm Technicolor has set up an animation development and production division.

VP of animation Steven Wendland says experience gained in operating Technicolor's animation studio in Bangalore, India over the past five years convinced the company that the time was right to get into original production.

Having worked in animation at Vancouver, Canada-based Mainframe Entertainment for 10 years, Wendland says he was happy to have his role at Technicolor evolve from overseeing service work to straddling both the service and production businesses.

The company has set up a dedicated original development team based in L.A. and hired two industry vets to join Wendland and lead development and production efforts—Jean MacCurdy, former president of Warner Bros. Animation and Fonda Snyder, co-founder and former president of Storyopolis Productions and former VP of original movies with Disney Channel. And heading up the team is Technicolor Digital Productions president Tim Samoff, former president of Sony Imageworks.

To kick off the slate, the Technicolor team convinced Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial cartoonist Berkeley Breathed of *Bloom County* fame to let the company produce his first-ever TV series, based on his picture book *Pete & Pickles*.

So far, a bible and initial scripts have been worked up for the 26 x half-hour CGI series for six- to 10-year-olds about a friendship between two mismatched characters—an easily-embar-

assed pig named Pete, and a giant runaway circus elephant named Pickles. Hilarious situations ensue as Pete and his new fugitive roomie navigate day-to-day life in close quarters and use their imaginations to enhance their larger-than-life adventures out in the world.

Second up is *Atomic Puppet*, a fast-paced, action-comedy for six to 12s about 11-year-old Joey and his superhero sidekick, a magical puppet that comes to life every time Joey puts it on his hand. Initial plans for the series are set to produce 52 x 11-minute eps. The series was created and is being penned by Mark Drop, whose credits include *Dinosaur Train* and *Kick Buttowski*, and Jerry Leibowitz who created and exec produced *The Mouse and the Monster*.

Though the first two series out of the gate are comedic, Wendland says the team plans to take on a wide range of genres and has roughly seven fledgling concepts in the incubator, though he added that the company only plans to develop a few at a time. **KC**



Comedy *Atomic Puppet* is the 100-year-old company's latest series in development

## LINKS

Technicolor >

[www.technicolor.com](http://www.technicolor.com)

# Multilingual dubs make money State-side

Husband-and-wife team Aly Jetha and Shabnam Rezaei knew they were tapping into an under-served market when they created their first Farsi-language direct-to-DVD feature *Babak and Friends: A First Narooz* in 2006. The animated movie about the Persian New Year sold 30,000 units in the US and Canada and was particularly popular with Persian immigrant families.

The proceeds from the DVD helped to raise the money needed to build the couple's Big Bad Boo animation studio in Vancouver, Canada. Five years later, the idea is to further tap into the appetite for multicultural content by appealing directly to consumers. (The US Census Bureau recently reported that 82% of the country's population growth between 2005 and 2050 will come from immigration. Currently 44% of US kids are from a minority ethnicity, and that number is expected to reach 62% by 2050.)

"Those niches together make a sizable market and we are creating a brand around this multicultural platform," says Jetha.

To that end, the pair launched Oznoz.com globally in November as an online sales and distribution platform à la Amazon and iTunes to offer content in six languages (Arabic, Chinese, Indian, Korean, Persian and Spanish) and ship products worldwide. At this early stage, most sales come from Canada and the US, with business also

picking up in Japan, Australia and the UK. The site sells DVDs, as well as books and games, and is looking to beef up the offering with original content and non-English dubs of preschool and core kid brands that are already well-known in the territory.

So a producer who has dubbed a series into Arabic for the Middle Eastern market, for example, can resell that same dub in a totally different territory through Oznoz.com, potentially increasing the brand's merchandise sales because it would help popularize the IP among niche minority groups. Rezaei says price-points compare to other online retail stores, with DVDs going for US\$14 each and a newly launched comic book tagged at US\$4.95.

At press time, the company had signed a deal with Al Jazeera Children's Channel to distribute its Arabic content on Oznoz.com and is contacting other producers. In terms of driving awareness, Big Bad Boo is reaching out to different immigrant communities through their cultural publications and partnering with different cultural organizations—such as the Arab Cultural Center in Michigan, the Asia Society in New York and more than 60 other museums, libraries and schools in North America and the UK—to build awareness and traffic for the site. **KC**

## LINKS

Oznaz >

[www.oznoz.com](http://www.oznoz.com)





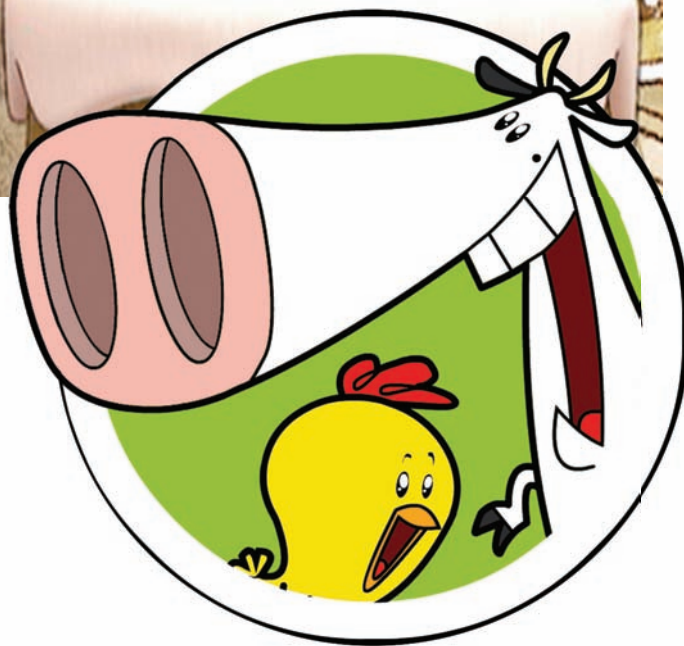
Child empowerment is a key theme for Cookie Jar's *Ella the Elephant*, while Millimages' *Rose & Timothy* (bottom) sparks an interest in science through comedy

### A can-do attitude abounds in *Ella the Elephant*

Toronto, Canada-based Cookie Jar optioned picture book *Ella the Elephant*, created by Seattle's Carmella and Steven D'amico, and quickly turned to writer Sheila Dinsmore. Her job was to spin the story about the helpful young elephant into a full-fledged 52 x 11-minute series that echoes the artwork of the book property with its 2-D backgrounds and toon-shaded CGI characters. This series for preschoolers is "really about child empowerment and depicting Ella's quiet self-confidence on-screen," says VP of development Jilliane Reinseth. You see, Ella has a floppy red hat, which she believes can transform into whatever object she might need to assist someone in trouble. So in one instance, she imagines her hat turning into a basket with which she can collect an errant bunch of apples that her friend has dropped. In another, it inflates to the size of tent that Ella can use to place over the heads of her pals and shelter them from a rainstorm. Cookie Jar has a bible, educational curriculum, scripts and a three-minute trailer ready to go and is working with a budget of US\$9.5 million for a fall 2011 delivery.

### Finding the funny side of science

New preschool animated series *Rose & Timothy* from Paris-based Millimages follows the adventures of a happy-go-lucky, kind-hearted cow named Rose and tenacious, hot-tempered little chick Timothy. The pair also happen to be investigative journalists assigned to discover all they can about the outside world on behalf of their fellow barnyard friends back on the farm. Its through this lens that the 52 x 11-minute series is aiming to instill an interest in science and experimentation in young viewers through the hilarious antics of the enthusiastic, yet hapless characters.



The duo sets out promising to faithfully report their findings each day, while their research requires them to do things like scour the desert to find a mirage or eat spinach to determine whether or not it really makes you stronger. Along the way, know-it-all manipulator Timothy often tries to take advantage of Rose's naivety. For example, he gets Rose to traipse around a precarious mountaintop to assess the risk of an avalanche. However, Rose has unerring luck and after she completes her perusal of the snowy peak without incident, it's Timothy who sets off the avalanche.

Still in development, the series has no firm delivery date, but Millimages has a bible and scripts on-hand and is seeking presales and possible co-production partners with an approximate budget of US\$7.9 million. **KC**

#### LINKS

Cookie Jar > [www.cookiejarentertainment.com](http://www.cookiejarentertainment.com)  
Millimages > [www.millimages.com](http://www.millimages.com)





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# ZHU ZHU PETS TAKE A BOY-CENTRIC TURN

by gary rusak

**Cepia looks to  
make trendy toy  
into long-term hit  
by branching into  
action-based play**

Last year might have aptly been dubbed Year of the Zhu Zhu in toy circles, as “the pets with no mess” dominated retail aisles and made manufacturer Cepia a player to watch in the industry. Now the question remains as to whether or not the company can maintain that level of commercial success.

Accordingly, Cepia took a good look at its property and identified an opportunity for a brand extension that would bring Zhu Zhu Pets to a wider demo and spin off a whole new array of consumer products.

“What we found was that with girls, the brand extends from about four years old to somewhere around 12,” says Laura Kurzu, VP of marketing for Cepia. “Somewhere around seven to eight, boys begin to migrate towards action. They think it isn’t socially acceptable [to play with Zhu Zhu Pets], and the ones who do stick with it tend to be ‘closet players.’”

Enter the action. Cepia took the basic idea behind the mechanical hamsters and added an action-oriented play pattern and tribal associations to the products. “It’s the same fundamental proposition, but we added weaponry,” says Kurzu. “It is consistent with the brand though—that is paramount.”

The newly dubbed Kung Zhu line started hitting shelves this past summer, but Cepia’s big push occurred during the late-2010 holiday season. Learning from its previous success, the company is keeping the price-point of the warrior rodents under US\$10 apiece, with additional armor and accessories coming in at under US\$6.

A back-story to drive more product iterations is also being developed through a direct-to-DVD release expected next year. Although the details are scarce, the tale will play upon the core boy demo’s traditional fondness for tribal affiliations.

In the meantime, Cepia is advertising the new extension with boy-friendly spots on Cartoon Network and Nickelodeon, and has thus far scored distribution with big-box retailers throughout North America and Europe, covering roughly 60 countries around the globe. The marketing will follow much the same



A licensing program to accompany new brand Kung Zhu is already in the works

tack as the original property, with in-store displays and targeted TV ads acting as the key awareness drivers.

Not surprisingly, the core toy is ready to enter the ancillary product space, and Kurzu says that Cepia is judicious when it picks its licensing partners, preferring the quality-over-quantity approach. Boca Raton, Florida-based The Bridge, for example, was chosen as a licensee for the Kung Zhu line, as it has experience creating products based on the original Zhu Zhu brand.

“What we are trying to do together is build a brand to take this property from a one-dimensional play pattern to a broader range, offering kids a broader experience,” says Jay Foreman, founder and president of The Bridge. “We want to make sure this brand can go the long haul, so we are developing a range of products to drive the brand for a longer period of time.”

The Bridge’s Kung Zhu products are slated to land at retail during Q1 with full TV ad support and include the Kung Zhu Fortress Collector Case (US\$10.99), Kung Zhu six-inch plush with sounds (US\$7.99) and Kung Zhu three-inch figure packs (US\$6.99).

“From our experience, retailers will open up to more SKUs as the brand establishes itself as a mainstay,” Foreman says. “We have found that everyone is on-board with the concept because everyone wants to see this brand around for the long run.”

## LINKS

- The Bridge > [www.thebridgedirect.com](http://www.thebridgedirect.com)
- Cepia > [www.cepiainc.com](http://www.cepiainc.com)

# Turner EMEA goes Pop

While not exactly putting all its eggs in one basket, Turner Cartoon Network Enterprises is grouping its properties into sets of umbrella brands. The goal is to extend their reach and category coverage across EMEA.

"It was a way to offer a multitude of opportunities for our partners," says Alan Fenwick, VP of Turner CN Enterprises. It essentially gives licensees a bit more bang for the buck, he adds.

To start, there's CN Originals, which focuses on the broadcaster's first crop of series that started airing after its 1992 launch, such as *The Powerpuff Girls*. It's designed to capitalize on teen and young adult nostalgia for the shows from their younger days. Then there's CN Pop. This brand is aimed squarely at kids four to 10 and encompasses comedic series currently in regular rotation on the network and free-to-air channels throughout Europe and other territories. *Camp Lazlo*, *Chowder*, *Codename: Kids Next Door*, *The Marvelous Misadventures of Flapjack*, *Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends*, *The Grim Adventures of Billy and Mandy* and *My Gym Partner's a Monkey* round out the package.

Notably, the idea of placing together CN's comedy series, which aren't an obvious fit for hardlines licensing categories like toys, originated in Latin America, where price-points on licensed hard goods also make them a much tougher sell than soft goods like t-shirts or food-related promo items. Interestingly, Turner CNE is looking to employ the concept across the globe, starting with the UK and Europe.

"Rather than have a partner have one brand on one t-shirt here and one backpack here, we have grouped them together," says Fenwick. For the licensee, it means being able to acquire rights to all the brands with one deal, rather than seven separate ones. And they are able to put CN Pop branding on products at their discretion.

Fenwick explains that the brands have complementary attributes, such as being fun, optimistic, and are all in some way connected to food. "So CN Pop lent itself to a cafe promotion with British Home Stores in the UK," he adds. In August, the retail chain BHS, which concentrates on selling apparel, kitchen goods



Turner CN Enterprises introduced new umbrella brand CN Pop through a kids meal promo at UK retailer BHS

and furniture, partnered with CN to rebrand the kids menu in the 123 cafés across its 186 locations. What turned out to be CN Pop meals featured a sandwich, yogurt and drink, packaged with a free piece of fruit, an activity sheet and crayons.

Turner CNE is now targeting softlines licensees to pick up the program, so new style guides for the umbrella brands are scheduled to roll out in Q1 2011. Fenwick and his team are looking to fill back-to-school, party goods, accessories, bedding and stationery categories. **GR**

## LINKS

Cartoon Network UK > [www.cartoonnetwork.co.uk](http://www.cartoonnetwork.co.uk)

# Building a new preschool play pattern

Innovative is not necessarily a word that comes to mind when describing the humble crayon. However, Montreal, Canada-based Wooky Entertainment is doing its best to change that perception with an entirely new entry in the coloring implement market.

The Block Crayon is a hybrid building block/crayon that combines two basics of preschool play. And Wooky's hoping that retailers and customers alike will see its simple appeal.

"It joins two of preschoolers' most popular activities," says Caroline Desmarais-Girard, marketing coordinator for Wooky Entertainment. "It brings coloring and building together. It really helps preschoolers develop dexterity and creativity."

While distribution of The Block Crayon is currently limited to specialty stores in North America, including six Diamond's Hallmark stores in New York City and online specialty retailer Lillian Vernon, Desmarais-Girard says the company is looking to seal more mass-market distribution deals this year.

Currently, the crayons are available in packs of seven, 12 and 20, retailing for between US\$5.99 and US\$16.99 apiece. Wooky has also developed a themed playset with a farm motif



Combining color and construction, Wooky's Block Crayon aims to captivate toddlers

(US\$24.99). The crayons can be stored in the farmhouse-shaped box that also includes a roll of printed coloring paper featuring the shapes of typical farm animals. Wooky has plans to build upon this concept with further offerings in the coming quarters.

On the marketing front, Wooky is relying on word-of-mouth initially, but is also working on a 30-second TV spot and promotional material for in-store use.

Meanwhile, signing licenses to drum up awareness isn't on Wooky's radar just yet. "I can see how licensing might be a good fit in the future," says Desmarais-Girard. "But right now we are concentrating on getting the product out in front of consumers."

The reaction from retailers and buyers at last fall's Dallas Toy Preview was positive and the three-year-old company is looking to the product as a way of carving out a chunk of the preschool arts & craft market to augment its tween girl business.

"We have gotten a really good reaction from this," says Desmarais-Girard. "The retailers keep telling us that it has been awhile since they have seen a new basic craft." **GR**

## LINKS

Wooky Entertainment > [www.wookyentertainment.com](http://www.wookyentertainment.com)



# Panini aims to stick around in North America

**W**hile it has been a mainstay with European kids for more than 40 years, the collectible sticker album hasn't really made significant inroads in North America. But the number-one manufacturer associated with the category globally is hoping to change that. After undertaking a soft-launch last spring, Panini is making a full-on attempt to crack the US market.

"It seemed like the right time," says Mark Warsop, CEO of Panini America, the Arlington, Texas-based arm of the international company. "We have never really had an office here—it's a market we never had a huge presence in."

Conditions are ripe now, says Warsop, because the established trading card and collectibles market in North America has edged up in demographic and price-point over the last decade. "Trading cards have become extremely sophisticated," he says. "They have become intricate and we think this has alienated kids."

And with the price-point on trading cards leaving kids behind, Panini believes it's a perfect time to enter the market with its high-volume, low-cost strategy. Each Panini sticker album retails for US\$2 and packets of eight stickers are priced at US\$1 each. "We sell five-sticker packs in other territories, but we added three more so we could reach that US\$1 threshold," says Warsop.

Panini took its first kick at the can with a World Cup FIFA licensed offering in spring 2010 that targeted Hispanic regions in the US, specifically California, Texas and Florida. "We had incredible success," says Warsop. "We were pleasantly surprised; it was our first time with a real US-focused program and we moved more than 10 million units."

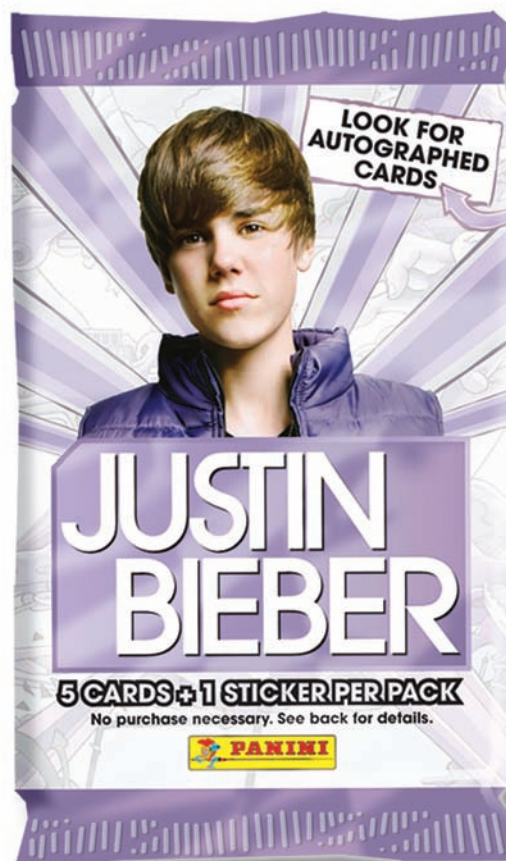
With retail support across the board at major big-box stores such as Walmart and Target, longstanding licensing relationships with Disney and DreamWorks, and new ones with US sports leagues the NFL, NBA and the NHL, Panini is set to go wide with new product ranges in 2011. (Among those will be an extensive one for Disney/Pixar's *Cars 2*, which hits theaters worldwide this summer.)

However, Warsop admits that the North American market has its own hurdles in terms of making sticker collecting a part of kid culture like it is in Europe.

"Our biggest challenge is educating kids in the US about the concept," Warsop says, adding that European children are more likely to visit news kiosks and small independent shops—the retail mainstays for the category—than their American counterparts. "It's going to take awhile for them to understand the idea."

A recent promotion that took place in Boston, Massachusetts is a good example of the way Panini is tackling the problem. The manufacturer inserted roughly 450,000 NFL sticker albums into the *Boston Globe* in early November. Over the following weeks, sheets of corresponding stickers were also inserted into the newspaper.

"Over three weeks we probably gave away two or three million dollars worth of product," says Warsop. "But it was necessary to introduce the product and concept. We are still analyzing the results of that promotion, but Boston is certainly tracking a lot higher than other US cities at this point."



Teenage dream—Panini US was quick to pick up the sticker book license for pop idol Justin Bieber and got product into stores within a few weeks of signing the deal

Another weapon in Panini's arsenal is the quickness with which it can deliver products. A case in point is the recent acquisition of the Justin Bieber license for the category. While the major Bieber sticker book push will coincide with Easter this spring, an initial product range arrived on retail shelves only a few weeks after the deal had been signed. The company's longstanding relationship with retailers has also enabled Panini to produce and place new products into stores in the relative blink of an eye.

"If we really motor, we can go from start to finish in six weeks," Warsop says. And for that reason Panini is always on the lookout for the newest and hottest licenses. "The retailers see the value in hopping on these trends fast." So Panini US is now looking to pick up the next big licenses across most genres and demos.

Setting up shop in the US has been a bit of a gamble, but if the North American market adopts the product the way Europe has, annual sales of US\$300 million are not out of reach for the new division. "We know the potential is huge, but we also know we have to be patient," notes Warsop. **GR**

## LINKS

Panini > [www.paninionline.com](http://www.paninionline.com)

**nickelodeon**  
**KALEIDOSCOPE**  
 REFLECTING TRENDS...TODAY AND TOMORROW

# GAME TIME

HOW KIDS DECIDE WHAT VIDEO GAMES THEY'RE GOING TO BUY AND WHEN TO PLAY 'EM

by erin miller

**I**n our last Kaleidoscope (October 2010), we looked at the female gamer and explored her interests and motivations around online gaming. As a next step, we wanted to gain some perspective on what drives kids to game across various platforms. In this second part of our gaming study, we're aiming to understand how both genders shop for video games, make purchasing decisions and identify the times of the day they play games.

We know the significant role that video gaming plays in kids' lives. Gaming is one of the top activities chosen by kids, especially boys, to occupy their free time. In order for us to fully comprehend why kids choose to play the types of games they do across platforms, it was important to take a step back and understand the purchasing process from the outset. Having shopped with kids ages eight to 13 at various video game retailers, we discovered just how thoughtful they are when determining what to buy.

Both boys and girls are big browsers when shopping for video games. While we know that girls, even at young ages, tend to shop like this regardless of category, boys do not. However, in this category, boys are seemingly dedicating more time to browsing than girls are.

The act of shopping was interesting and unique to this category. Several kids sat on the floor with their purchase options in hand, reading the packages and examining pictures. And in order to see all possible choices beyond their eye level, some crawled across the floor to ensure they had exhausted all their options.

Packaging is also very important when it comes to game purchases. Kids, especially boys, take their time to look at pictures, read the back of boxes, and even pull enclosed pamphlets out of packages to gather more information on game play.

Shelf layout must also not be forgotten as a key factor when it comes to making a purchase decision. It's hard to see all their choices if games are stacked behind one another.



As for when kids play video games, there were some significant differences across age groups. For eight- and nine-year-olds, the heaviest gaming activity occurs after school. Throughout the course of a typical day, consoles and online are the platforms this demo turns to most often, with online skewing girl. While mobile does show up, penetration remains low. Similarly, after-school hours are peak play time for 10s and 11s, primarily through console and online platforms. Mobile devices, however, account for a more significant part of game play throughout the course of a day, especially with girls. This age group also showed the highest console use after school than all other ages.

Kids ages 12 to 13 game the most during after-school and evening hours, although with this age group, gaming truly occurs throughout the course of an entire day, including during school. Thanks to portable devices like the iPod Touch and cell phones, kids are taking "quick hit" game breaks in between classes and during lunch periods. For boys, the morning served as the second-most common time to play console games, just behind after school. It can be assumed after school sports start to play a more significant role in their lives as they get older, in addition to receiving increasing amounts of homework. Therefore, older boys are making time in the mornings to get their game on. **N**

This concludes part two of our report on gaming. Our next Kaleidoscope will report on the role of play in the lives of families today. For more information, contact [Kaleidoscope@nick.com](mailto:Kaleidoscope@nick.com).

(Source: Nick Kids & Family Research. October 2010; Qual sample size: N = 32)

In an effort to keep you in touch with our audience and give a voice to our consumers, the Brand and Consumer Insights Department at Nickelodeon Kids & Family has created Nickelodeon Kaleidoscope. Every month, Kaleidoscope will capture key areas of interest across the kid and family cultural landscape, provide an understanding of attitudes and behaviors, and report on trends and buzz.





## BinWeevils merges VOD and social networking in new online service

The UK-based 3-D online entertainment platform's social VOD service, which launched last October, now allows its subscribers to choose from more than 200 hours of Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network TV content on-demand while simultaneously communicating with other users through their avatars. In the true nature of on-demand, the site's target of seven- to 12-year-olds can view content at their own pace within a cinema screening room but can also interact with and make comments to others who happen to be in the virtual theater.

"We see this as a launch of a whole new category, a fusion of two very popular forms of kids entertainment, which is social gaming and VOD. We think in bringing them together they can each bolster one another," says BinWeevils non-executive director and investor Rod Henwood. (His experience is steeped in VOD, as he launched UK-based Channel 4's 4OD service and led the now-defunct Project Kangaroo.)

In creating this virtual world/social gaming/VOD hybrid, Henwood and his team pulled together the concept out of what he deems are current voids within the social gaming worlds—lack of user engagement and visitor retention. At the time of the social VOD launch, individual BinWeevils users, which number roughly 580,000 a month, were spending 30 minutes on the site per visit. While roughly 80% of BinWeevils' gaming content is offered for free, the new service has so far fulfilled the goals of lengthening visit times and converting more users into full-fledged subscribers.

Streaming video content has become a standard feature of kid-caster websites the world over, but UK-based virtual world BinWeevils is putting a new spin on online VOD. It's so novel, in fact, that Cartoon Network and Nickelodeon UK have handed over a whack of content to the service, along with several indie distributors like Cake Entertainment.

"We see this as a next step to ensuring we stay ahead in terms of immersiveness," says Henwood. Apart from the monthly subscription component, which is US\$7.80, or US\$4.65 with a 12-month commitment, Henwood cares most about the total number of minutes consumed on the site, which exceeds 60 million monthly.

It seems Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network were also interested in the minutes kids spend on BinWeevils and, in an effort to capitalize on their engagement, are each providing hours of branded VOD content in exchange for a percentage of the subscription price as well as rewards on a platform-to-channel basis.

"We have collaborated with BinWeevils in the past on marketing activity, but this ticks both boxes in that it offers premium content to those who may not already have multichannel offerings," says Joe Braman, commercial director at Cartoon Network's parent company Turner Broadcasting.

Braman's team provides BinWeevils with regularly refreshed Cartoon Network content from a range of shows including *Ben 10*, *Chowder* and *The Secret Saturdays*. BinWeevils also links to the channel's website, which has its own offerings of games and programming information and averages one million unique users a month.

"We are going to place our content where there's an audience for it," says Braman. "BinWeevils is the first kid-specific VOD service [in the UK] and it makes absolute sense for us to be on this platform."

While the audience is currently heavily UK-based, the website hosts users from 120 territories and is looking to expand in other countries, including the US, where it rolled out advertising initiatives last month. Naturally, the two broadcasters currently on-board are involved in these efforts and will help in the push for expansion into more English-speaking territories throughout the year.

And global distribution isn't the only area earmarked for growth. BinWeevils is in the process of securing more broadcasting partnerships in order to bolster its VOD content offerings and is looking to acquire more third-party programming to join shows coming in from global distributors like Target Entertainment, DHX Media, Millimages and Cake. **IS**

### LINKS

• BinWeevils >	<a href="http://www.binweevils.com">www.binweevils.com</a>
• Cartoon Network >	<a href="http://www.cartoonnetwork.co.uk">www.cartoonnetwork.co.uk</a>
• Nickelodeon >	<a href="http://www.nick.co.uk">www.nick.co.uk</a>



# READY TO WEAR

## Tween fashion site takes girls' designs into the real world

**I**n the true spirit of fashion, design website FashionPlaytes.com is carving out its own trend that incorporates elements of gaming, fashion content and e-commerce. The Massachusetts-based website is putting a consumer products spin on online fashion play by allowing young girls to partake in personalized, social dress-up that materializes into purchasable, wearable clothing items. And after securing another round of Series A funding to the tune of US\$4 million, the eight-person startup is counting on additional social networking functions to create a whole new multilayered online experience.

Founder Sarah McIlroy pieced the concept together from her previous gaming experience at Hasbro and Atari and her desire to give young girls like her daughter a means of self-expression. The website launched in November 2009 against a backdrop of popular girls fashion-oriented virtual worlds like Stardoll.com and a US online retail market that generates US\$152 billion annually. "We're unique because the girls can actually buy the clothes they are designing," says Val Fox, VP of marketing. "We're the first to connect the virtual and physical worlds of design for a young audience."

This young demo of five- to 12-year-olds uses the Fashion Playtes interface to become the creative directors of personalized fashion labels. Users select base items like hoodies, pants and t-shirts and sift through a selection of five million possible style options to customize and embellish the clothing according to sleeve hems and ribbon rations. Girls can also draw inspiration from on-hand Look Books that feature seasonal templates curated by Fashion Playtes staff members. Items are bought using gift certificates or are saved and ordered by parents for between roughly US\$40 and US\$50 apiece.

"There's a heightened desire for this when so many teen idols and celebrities are launching their own fashion and product lines," says Fox. Substantiating her belief are the 200,000 unique garments that have been created to date, tens of thousands of which have shipped globally.

Within its first year, the site has garnered a 30% customer return rate, which Fox attributes to the products' appeal to the growing trend of customization. Also, given the higher price-points, an entire Fashion Playtes wardrobe isn't the expectation. "It's not an everyday product like clothes from The Gap. Ours is more of an experience-based product, so we're not trying to compete with the volume shop," says Fox.

That doesn't mean establishing a real-world retail presence is out of the picture. This past summer, Fashion Playtes paired with house of Hello Kitty, Sanrio, to offer a series of branded kiosks in the company's retail locations across the US. It's also in talks with a number of brands and media properties that are interested in increasing mindshare with tween girls using Fashion Playtes' program interface.

This spring, Fox and her team will be rolling out a finely tuned community-enabled website design that will include more gaming and user-to-user sharing components. In taking on more social networking traits, users will be recognized via avatars, partake in fashion-oriented games, message one another and earn points based on their fashion designs.

The tools are there, Fox contends, to tap into an already vibrant conversation taking place among young girls. "As we've learned, girls have very distinct styles and develop their own unique voice when it comes to fashion at a very young age," she says.

Of course, behind the conversation is an e-commerce business that relies heavily on parental buy-in—and that fact is driving Fashion Playtes' marketing efforts. Along with bolstering its product offerings and customer base, a portion of the recent round of funding is earmarked for marketing to the parents who pay for the clothing. This holiday season, for instance, the company made a large push for parents to purchase Fashion Playtes gift certificates on behalf of their kids that can be redeemed for a customized item or outfit.

"Dress-up has long been a pastime of girls," says Fox. "This is just a natural progression with digital and e-commerce letting it take a new shape." **WGG**

### LINKS

Fashion Playtes >

[www.fashionplaytes.com](http://www.fashionplaytes.com)





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# Self-starters.com



A decade after Flash-based toons started making waves online, they remain a gatekeeper-free outlet for animators. And in this excerpt from his new book, *Directing Animation*, **David B. Levy** explores the reasons why the web continues to serve as the ultimate arena for exercising one's creative chops.

Animation director Dan Meth of web series *The Meth Minute 39* fame

**IN** 2010, New York's ASIFA-East created an original 12-month wall calendar as a fundraising device. It featured artwork from some of the Big Apple's top animation talents. Among the 12 artists was pioneering web animation director Xeth Feinberg, who (at the calendar launch event) screened a new series of self-produced web cartoons called *Ugly Realities*, a spoof on the "reality show" genre. I've known Feinberg since the mid-1990s and whenever he has a gap between paying projects, he'll crank out some new indie shorts, which he'll self-distribute on his websites xeth.com and mishmashmedia.com, in addition to sending them out as links to clients, network executives, colleagues and friends.

For Feinberg, making indie web shorts and series is not just a creative outlet, it's the reason he has a career in the first place. As an independent animator and cartoonist with a background in CD-ROM animation at the dawn of the new millennium, he had been mastering the potential of Flash (in his words, "the miraculous little computer application that makes webtoons possible") for just over a year—which practically made him a wizened old expert in the field. The director explains, "In 1999 I was already making my pseudo-silentera black-and-white *Bulbo* animations, had cut my teeth on a series of children's interactive storybook webtoons, and had created the first

more or less fully animated webtoon series for Scifi.com, *The Existential Adventures of Astro-Chimp*. I also did enough other freelance Flash production work to have learned a lot about how not to efficiently produce webtoons. I worked solo and was able to turn out a finished webisode in a week or less. All this work was getting seen, and though I was making a living at it, web animation still seemed more like a fluke than a career."

A key part of Feinberg's story helps set apart animation for the web from TV animation. Because the director had created his early *Bulbo* series with the intention of self-distributing it on the web, he didn't have to first pitch the series to a traditional TV network that might say no. The limitations of the late-'90s bandwidths and modem speeds helped set the simple style for the *Bulbo* shorts, allowing a single animator/director to create, animate and distribute the series independently. Most importantly it helped set up Feinberg to create his next series as a paid project for Scifi.com. While the rules and business model of the internet are still being written more than 10 years later, one thing remains true—the web is still a place where someone (like Feinberg) can create without a "gatekeeper" blocking his path, post work on his own "channel" or website and spin such visibility into a larger success.

## Groundbreaker—Dan Meth

Many creators owe their start in the biz to Mr. Fred Seibert who has spawned oodles of opportunities for pitchers through his initiatives at Cartoon Network/Hanna-Barbera (*What-A-Cartoon!*) and Nickelodeon/Frederator (*Oh-Yeah! Cartoons* and *Random! Cartoons*). Webtoon director Dan Meth arrived on the animation scene in 1999 and gradually made a name for himself through his internet cartoons. Fred hired Meth in March 2006, and they both began to search for ways to work with one another on original content.

What they came up with, *The Meth Minute 39*, was a very forward-looking series, a glimpse into the not-too-distant future of web series animation. A few years earlier, Meth was a struggling freelancer with a knack for short, punchy and funny web animations that happened to score millions of hits. When Meth came to work for Seibert, the director used his initial proximity to Seibert to pitch cartoon ideas for *Random! Cartoons* (an anthology of seven-minute standalone cartoons, each acting as potential pilots for series). Seibert wasn't interested in any of Meth's pilot pitches, but neither he nor Meth seemed discouraged by that. Eventually, Meth dreamed up a pitch for what would become *The Meth Minute 39*. His idea was to make a grab-bag series of unrelated short internet cartoons—one per week,



over 39 weeks. Eventually, the plan was ironed out and Seibert began to personally fund *The Meth Minute 39*, which, as a series of independent films, would air on Channel Frederator (a broadband internet channel) and become widely available on YouTube.

They unveiled their series with a certified phenomenon of a short called *Internet People*. It was a very shrewd beginning for the series because it basically summed up (in song) the history of pop culture as spread on the internet while at the same time placing *The Meth Minute 39* within that context. The short attracted millions of hits and lots of attention in the media. As a film, *Internet People* owes a lot of its success to Meth's catchy little tune. Animating to a song lends an advantage to a filmmaker because it provides a tight little structure on which to base the film. Other shorts in the series poked fun at targets such as Jem and the Holograms, Mike Tyson, James Brown, the Beatles, foreign animated cartoons, comic book noir, the emo generation and much more. *The Meth Minute 39* was like the internet equivalent of Robert Smigel's *Saturday TV Funhouse*. Just as in Smigel's satirical shorts, the strengths and weaknesses of Meth's films were largely determined not by his skill (he's a consistently good and confident filmmaker), but by how well he chose his pop culture targets and how often his writing was able to carry it beyond an inspired idea.

Part of the fun and opportunity of making 39 shorts is to experiment a bit. For instance, Meth's short *Mike Tyson's Brunch Out!!*, a pun on the popular 1980s video game, *Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!!*, gave Meth the chance to create a deliberately disjointed short that gives one the feeling of picking up a little bit of conversation from each table at a busy restaurant. On one hand, the film makes a point about brunchers who are lost in their own worlds, while on the other hand, it's an illustrated joke—Mike Tyson out of context, eating brunch and randomly spouting out Tysonisms on demand. The dueling concepts compete with each other, threatening to break apart the whole. It's interesting to see how many ideas a one-minute film can or can't hold and that's part of the adventure of this whole enterprise.

Rarely does an individual hear about a series launch that they can possibly imitate themselves. While *The Meth Minute 39* was set up to be a personally funded commercial loss, it's clearly the opening salvo of a new



Amy Winfrey's *Making Fiends* started out as a short web series and ended up getting picked up by Nick for TV

business plan, already spinning off a subsequent Meth-created series, *Nite Fite*, which was funded by a commercial sponsor. How's that for results? Each of us can pick up the baton and make our own "Meth Minutes," possibly even making 39 shorts over 39 weeks. Seibert has hinted he might repeat this himself, although he points out that it's uncertain such a format would work for another filmmaker. I'm inclined to agree. Meth's gifts perfectly suit this type of project. First off, he's imaginative, funny and has a real gift for timing and storytelling. While his interests are broad, including rock music, '80s pop culture and video games, his focus is decidedly narrow, perhaps owing to his background in newspaper comics (Syracuse University's *Daily Orange*)—giving each cartoon a laser-like precision. The short length lets Meth gets in and out without anybody getting hurt.

At a recent event at The School of Visual Arts, legendary animation director Ralph Bakshi fielded a question from someone in the audience who challenged that it was not possible to make your own feature and get it distributed toward making a profit. Bakshi answered, "You mean to tell me that there's no way to do business? I don't believe that. There's always a way to figure it out. It's your problem to figure out. Not mine." *The Meth Minute 39* is in the same spirit. Make something good and get it out there, and a business model will form.

## The webtoon as self-development

When I introduced a panel event at the 2009 Ottawa International Animation Festival to launch my book *Animation Development: From Pitch to Production*, I joked that my book could have been called, *Self-Development*.

This is because if someone seriously has the goal of creating, pitching, selling and producing her own series, it will require all kinds of self-development—as an artist, writer and storyteller. Similarly, the unique format of a web cartoon (being short, fast and cheap to make) allows its creator a lot of self-development opportunities. And, unlike a pitch for an animated series, the webtoon is not at the mercy of a development executive's OK. While it's true that *The Meth Minute 39* was a project paid for and distributed by an established media company (Frederator), it need not be so. Although Xeth Feinberg has made animations for Icebox.com, Scifi.com, HuffingtonPost.com and others, he is also a one-man animation machine turning out terrific independent web cartoons and series—all within the confines of his home studio.

I've admired Feinberg's work since discovering it at an ASIFA-East festival jury screening in the mid 1990s. Some independent animators are content to make film after film that are similar in tone, structure and subject. Feinberg's body of work is unique in that he's made successful dialogue-driven toons (the *Papu* series), silent-era-style black-and-white cartoons (the *Bulbo* series) and one-shot narratives (*The Old Country*). Unifying the filmmaker's work is his distinct style, which seems like a mixture of Hanna-Barbera, indie comics and the pie-eyed designs of the 1930s.

Feinberg's self-produced body of work did not go unnoticed by San Francisco-based Mondomedia.com, which awarded the director a webtoon syndication plan for his *Bulbo* series that preserved all the filmmaker's rights while providing production funds upfront. Even more notable, for jumping media genres, not

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long ago Blue Sky Studios recruited Feinberg as a story artist to write jokes and content for their feature films *Ice Age* and *Robots*. The director's commitment to self-development through webtoons has a lot to do with this success. Because webtoons are short, simple and fast productions, they automatically encourage greater experimentation in form and content. Nickelodeon's *Making Fiends* creator Amy Winfrey agrees. "Make lots of short films. Don't get hung up on one sequence or project. Creating a variety of quick films can teach you more about timing, staging and storytelling than laboring over one long film for years."

Feinberg's work never comes across as precious or fussed over. His strengths lie in his wisecrack vision, which is ironic, spontaneous, intellectual and lowbrow all at once. I wonder if the director's self-produced *Papu*, in which a blue goon perpetually swings a mighty hammer at both friends and foes alike, is Feinberg's answer to the trials and tribulations of the world of animation development. In a cartoon pitch, all relationships between characters must be clear and purposeful. *Papu*'s very description, which reads, "An Inexplicable Force of Nature," takes a jab at these conventions. In the *Papu* universe, characters are thrown together into relationships just to score a laugh. (Not a bad reason in such a short format!) *Papu* is rarely without his randomly chosen companions: a small generic boy and a drunken longshoreman. This trio is as inexplicable as the big blue guy himself. Dispensing with the usual rules of a character-driven cartoon, the director is free to spend his shorts any way he pleases, prolifically churning out cartoons aiming to win a broader audience, and also courting future career opportunities. Each toon becomes one more conk on the head, and I mean that in the best possible way.

## Technology

Animation thrived in the early days of the internet, when new web portals and "destination sites" were being touted (and funded) as the "next television." Because Flash animation files (unlike video) were small enough to be easily viewed by the average web-surfer, demand for them exploded. Web animation and the internet have come a long way since those early days, as bandwidth has increased, leading to a new frontier of broadband internet channels. So many possible destinations for presenting your animation, however, is not all roses. Xeth Feinberg describes a thorn or two. "There is so

much audience fragmentation and so many separate social networks that getting your work actually seen seems harder than in the days when you could just put a .swf file up on your little website and send out some emails. I think that's a problem affecting everyone from the largest music and film companies, ad agencies and news organizations on down. Nobody really understands the best way to do anything with this technology."

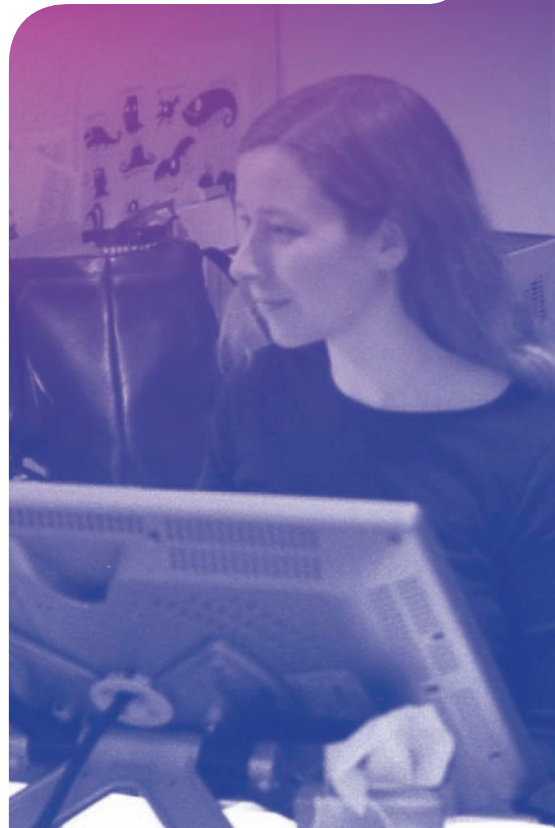
Curiosity may have killed the cat, but it's essential for a web animation director. Purposely spending time online to research what is new at animation sites is necessary. Dan Meth agrees, adding, "You can stay up-to-date by watching how others are doing it and knowing people outside of animation in other fields like web design and marketing." Along with staying up to date on technology in terms of the technical side of things, technology is also changing how people view your cartoons on the web. This is because video sites are always evolving. Web traffic is like a river forming new outlets. "You must understand the way people watch video to get the biggest audience," says Meth.

In general, technology has made online animation increasingly sophisticated and easier to create. At this point, there is really no difference between technical requirements for TV animation or film festivals, or for the internet. "If you can digitize it (and you can digitize anything), it can go online," says Feinberg. "If you want to animate your webtoon to the sophistication of Walt Disney's *Nine Old Men*, you technically can (good luck!). That's a big change from the turn-of-the-century dial-up web or even five years ago."

Perhaps most significantly, technology has brought the audience and the filmmaker closer together. For instance, when a viewer watches a film on YouTube, Atom Films or an animator's personal website, the viewer might leave a comment, giving feedback or asking the director a question. For Dan Meth, this is the most satisfying part of directing a web cartoon—posting it online and then reading positive comments from his audience. Although today's technology allows web cartoons to find an audience and connect with them, Xeth Feinberg reminds, "As a creator, you have to try to focus on the end-result, on what you want to do, and not just devote yourself to chasing technology. Because you will probably never catch up for long."

"Web technology is constantly changing in new and vexing ways. I try to stay up to date by making my own short films for the web. The good news for independent filmmakers is that websites like YouTube make it easier than ever to distribute films. . . I no longer have to worry about the expense and technical issues of hosting my own films on my own website. I curse at my computer a lot less now."

—Amy Winfrey, web and TV series animation director



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## The secret agenda of a webtoon

At present, the viewing public is dividing its time between TV and online destinations, sometimes watching online content on their TVs and vice versa. Either way, the message of how folks are now watching content has not been lost on pay-TV and broadcast networks, creating the need for them to have their own online presence. Web destinations such as SuperDeluxe.com and Atomfilms.com (owned by Turner and MTV Networks respectively) acquire existing short films and seek original content, which they can produce, own and post on their sites. The parent companies ensure that this low-risk development could spin into a TV series similar to the way the original *Beavis and Butt-Head* and *South Park* independent shorts led to successful series.

These online divisions of major networks allow for greater risk-taking, enabling edgier projects to break through, perhaps all the way back to a place on the TV screen. For many webtoon directors the goal may be for their self-produced creations to make the jump to the higher profile and better paying format of series TV. For example, Amy Winfrey's *Making Fiends* began as a self-produced web series in 2003, but a year later, Nickelodeon (in a fiendish mood) contacted her about the possibility of bringing the series to TV. The new incarnation of Winfrey's series debuted on Nickelodeon on October 4, 2008.

The lines between the web and TV will continue to blur but for now at least the web remains a great launching pad and a nice playground for tomorrow's directors. **N**



David B. Levy is the author of *Your Career in Animation: How to Survive and Thrive*—which was the first career guide for animation artists working in North America—*Animation Development:*

*From Pitch to Production and Directing Animation* (all Allworth Press). Levy has been an animation director for six series to date, including *Blue's Clues*, *Pinky Dinky Doo* and *The Electric Company*, and he's also completed six award-winning independent animated films. He teaches animation at Parsons School of Design, The School of Visual Arts and New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, and regularly lectures at Pratt Institute and the Rhode Island School of Design. You can reach him at [dbl1973@gmail.com](mailto:dbl1973@gmail.com).

# A Web Animation Director's 10 Commandments for Working at Home

To work at home is also to be distracted by all its comforts. With the hope that it might not only help make for a more efficient workday, but also ensure the work might get done by 7 p.m. and provide a clearly defined worktime/homelife boundary, here are my 10 Commandments.

**1**

### Go out before you start to work

This is very important because it gets your butt out of bed and forces you to throw on shoes and clothes. Plus, you get some air as you stretch your legs. It's a bad idea to simply stagger out of bed and plop down at your workstation straight away. I get up each morning and eat breakfast with my wife, who has a job with normal office hours in Manhattan. We head out the door together, but instead of commuting into the city, I do a short workout at the gym, grab a coffee, and walk home. I'm at my workstation by 10 a.m. and ready to start my day.

**2**

### Start your working day at 10 a.m. and finish by 7 p.m.

Since you're working from home, you need to have a sense of being done with work at a set time each day. Of course, there will be times where you'll have to keep working to make a deadline or juggle multiple jobs, but as a goal, try to create this healthy boundary between work and home. Also, by keeping to normal office hours, you'll stay ready to jump back into the workplace if your next job is at a studio.

**3**

### Stay away from Instant Messenger

IM can be a big distraction because it requires you to interact with people in relative real time. Non-work-related IMs get burdensome and can suck away hours at a time. Some animators use separate IM addresses for work time so they can separate work communication from the personal stuff.

**4**

### Stay connected through food

Make it a point to meet up with friends/industry peers for lunch outside of your home at least twice a week. Not only will this be an important source of nutrition, it will also get you out of the house to sustain friendships and start new ones. My breakfast buddies, animation directors Fran and Will Krause, would probably want me to note that this also works for morning meals too!

**5**

### Be mindful of the increased demand for timely communication

When working on-site, there is opportunity for direct in-person communication all day long. When working remotely, it's important to be extra mindful to communicate your questions, needs and status of the work on a regular basis.

**6**

### Watch your electronic tone

This is especially true when using IM and email. The reader always reads her own tone into someone else's writing, so it's important to be clear and professional. If there is a sticky matter (or complicated notes to go over), get the person on the phone to discuss it rather than risk being misunderstood in an email.

**7**

### Music and (maybe TV) is OK

Despite what Richard Williams advises, it is perfectly fine for some people to work to music throughout the day, because not many of us are involved in the kind of total body and mind concentration required to do the super-complex animation Williams practices. If you're working on a typical web animation at home, listening to music can help make for a pleasant workplace. Leaving the TV on can work too, but there is the problem of getting sucked into a TV show. Watch at your own risk.

**8**

### Lunch time is blog time

When I'm not meeting up for a lunch outside my home office, I eat at my computer and use it as an excuse to peruse my favorite animation blogs, which keep me informed on the state of the art and industry of animation. Food for thought, indeed.

### Make time to go to animation events

**9** Working from home can make you stir crazy (anyone see *The Shining*?) and it's easy to miss the companionship of your peers and friends in animation. Attending events (such as ASIFA-East's monthly screenings in New York City) makes for instant networking opportunities, keeping you connected to the larger world outside your home studio. You might also pick up a little inspiration.

**10**

### Make time to work on your own art

This can be tough under any circumstances, but it gets even tougher when you're working from home. The last thing you may want to do is work on your own art or animation at the end of a busy animation day, but if you make the time to do so (even a few days a week), you will make yourself a lot happier, create new samples, and ready yourself for untold opportunities. Best of all, working from home allows you some days or hours to yourself (when you are between freelance jobs). Fill in some of that time by attacking personal projects. **DBL**

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Ratings reports supplied by:





Consumer Electronics Show	Jan. 6-9, 2011	Las Vegas, NV	301-631-3983	www.cesweb.org	Elec
Retail's BIG Show	Jan. 9-12	New York, NY	708-486-0725	www.nrf.com/annual11	Merchandising
Hong Kong International Licensing Show	Jan. 10-12	Hong Kong	852-183-0668	www.hklicensingshow.com	Lic/Merch
Hong Kong Toys & Games Fair	Jan. 10-13	Hong Kong	852-2240-4435	www.hktoyfair.hktdc.com	Toys
NATPE	Jan. 24-26	Miami, FL	310-453-4440	www.natpe.org	TV/Prod/Prog/Dist
The Toy Fair	Jan. 25-27	London, England	44-207-701-7127	www.toyfair.co.uk	Toys
Nuremberg Toy Fair	Feb. 3-8	Nuremberg, Germany	49-91-1998-1316	www.nurembergtoyfair.com	Toys
Toy Fair	Feb. 13-16	New York, NY	212-675-1141	www.toyassociation.org	Toys/Games
iKids	Feb. 15	New York, NY	416-408-2300	ikids.kidscreen.com	Apps/Inter/Lic
KidScreen Summit	Feb. 15-18	New York, NY	416-408-2300	summit.kidscreen.com	EVERYTHING KIDS!
Little Airplane's How to Make a Great Preschool Series	Feb. 19-21	New York, NY	212-965-8999	www.littleairplane.com	TV
Game Developers Conference	Feb. 28-Mar. 4	San Francisco, CA	415-947-6000	www.gdconf.com	Inter/Games
Cartoon Movie	Mar. 2-4	Lyon, France	323-242-9353 (Belgium)	www.cartoon-media.be	Anim/Film
Brand Licensing Central	Mar. 7-8	Budapest, Hungary	44-208-956-2663 (UK)	www.advanstar.com	Lic/Merch
International Halloween, Costume & Party Show	Mar. 10-13	St. Louis, MO	800-323-5462	www.transworllexhibits.com	App/Lic/Merch
Tokyo International Anime Fair	Mar. 24-26	Tokyo, Japan	81-3-5320-4786	www.tokyoanime.jp/en	Animation
Bologna Children's Book Fair	Mar. 28-30	Bologna, Italy	39-051-282-111	www.bookfair.bolognafiere.it	Pub/Lic
WonderCon	Apr. 1-3	San Francisco, CA	619-491-2475	www.comic-con.org/wc	Publishing
MIPTV	Apr. 4-8	Cannes, France	33-1-4190-4400	www.miptv.com	Prod/Prog/TV/Dist
Sprockets International Film Festival for Children	Apr. 5-17	Toronto, Canada	416-934-3200	www.sprockets.ca	Film
Cartoons on the Bay	Apr. 7-10	Portofino, Italy	39-06-37-498-315	www.cartoonsbay.com	Anim/TV
NAB Show	Apr. 9-14	Las Vegas, NV	301-682-7962	www.nabshow.com	TV/MM
London Book Fair	Apr. 11-13	London, England	44-208-271-2124	www.londonbookfair.co.uk	Publishing
ToyCon	May 4-6	Scottsdale, AZ	212-675-1141	www.toyassociation.org	Toys/Merch
BookExpo America	May 23-26	New York, NY	800-840-5614	www.bookexpoamerica.com	Publishing
E3 Expo 2011	June 7-9	Los Angeles, CA	805-654-0171	www.e3expo.com	Inter/Games
Licensing International Expo	June 14-16	Las Vegas, NV	203-882-1300	www.licensingexpo.com	Lic/Merch
Tokyo Toy Show	June 16-19	Tokyo, Japan	81-3-3829-2513	www.toys.or.jp	Toys/Games
DISCOP East	June 21-23	Budapest, Hungary	33-1-4229-3224 (France)	www.discop.com	TV/Prod/Prog/Dist
Comic-Con International	July 21-24	San Diego, CA	619-491-2475	www.comic-con.org	Pub/Mktg/Promo
SIGGRAPH 2011	Aug. 7-11	Vancouver, Canada	312-321-6830	www.siggraph.org	Inter/Anim/MM
Cartoon Forum	Sep. 13-16	Sopot, Poland	322-242-9343 (Belgium)	www.cartoon-media.be	Anim/TV/Prod/Dist
MIPCOM Junior	Oct. 1-2	Cannes, France	33-1-4190-4400	www.mipcomjunior.com	TV/Prod/Prog/Dist
MIPCOM	Oct. 3-6	Cannes, France	33-1-4190-4400	www.mipcom.com	TV/Prod/Prog/Dist
Brand Licensing Europe	Oct. 18-20	London, England	44-208-956-2661	www.brandlicensing.eu	Lic/Merch

## Industry Legend

Advertising-Ad  
Animation-Anim  
Apparel-App

Distribution-Dist  
Electronics-Elec  
Film-F

Games-Gam  
Home Entertainment-HE  
Interactive-Inter

Licensing-Lic  
Manufacturing-Mfg  
Marketing-Mktg

Merchandising-Merch  
Multimedia-MM  
Production-Prod

Promotion-Promo  
Programming-Prog  
Publishing-Pub

Sports-Sp  
Toys-T  
TV-TV

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# On the move



Jacob Escobedo



Keiren Fisher



Lori Heiss



Laura Smith

**Cartoon Network** (Atlanta, Georgia, 404-827-1500): Cartoon Network has promoted **Michael Ouweleen** to the role of SVP and group creative director for its newly reorganized Creative Group. Ouweleen will continue to be based in Atlanta and oversee the new division, which combines on-air and off-channel creative departments for Cartoon Network, Adult Swim and Boomerang. Among his new responsibilities is spearheading the development of creative materials for Cartoon Network's off-channel needs, including print advertising, show launch kits, sales materials, PR materials, premiums and event environments. He will also continue to supervise all on-air promotions, program franchise packaging and sponsored promos for both Cartoon Network and Boomerang, and manage the development of on-air spots for the nets' licensed promotion partners. He was most recently SVP and creative director, on-air for Cartoon Network. **Jacob Escobedo** has also been upped to VP of creative design for the Creative Group. Escobedo now oversees all print, event and collateral design for Adult Swim, Boomerang and Cartoon Network, on top of all broadcast design for Cartoon and Boomerang. He is a 10-year Cartoon Network vet and previously served as a marketing and advertising designer in the trade creative group.

**Hasbro** (Providence, Rhode Island, 401-431-8222): The toyco has appointed former Disney exec **James Walker** to the role of VP of brand licensing, Europe, where he will lead the company's EMEA licensing initiatives and align brands with global companies and licensees. Walker will be based at Hasbro's London office and will report directly to Simon Waters, Hasbro SVP of global licensing. Walker joins Hasbro from The Walt Disney Company, where he most recently held the position of European infant director and was also the UK Home director and member of the Signature Europe and Emerging Markets lifestyle brand team.

**Nickelodeon** (New York, New York, 212-846-8018): The net has upped **Keiren Fisher** to SVP of series production, West Coast. Fisher, whose 25 years of production experience spans broadcast, cable, pay-per-view, home video and live events, will now oversee production of Nick live-action series produced in L.A. and manage the day-to-day operations of the company's production facilities at Nick on Sunset and Paramount Studios. Most recently VP of production, Fisher will continue to supervise production activities for the net's comedy series *iCarly*, as well as its companion website *iCarly.com*, along with *Big Time Rush*, *Victorious* and *True Jackson VP*. Fisher also oversees production on Nick preschool series *The Fresh Beat Band* and the multiple pilots shot for the network in L.A.

**Scholastic** (New York, New York, 212-343-6100): The children's publishing, education and media company has named **Lori Benton** as VP and publisher of its Trade Publishing division. Starting this month, Benton will oversee direction of the publishing program for all imprints of the division. She was most recently the GM and publisher of the fiction division of Minnesota-based Capstone Publishers and is currently chairman of the board of directors for Every Child a Reader, the non-profit foundation of The Children's Book Council dedicated to promoting the importance of reading among America's youth.

**Sesame Workshop** (New York, New York, 212-595-3456): **Laura Smith** and **Palak Solanki** have joined Sesame Workshop as VP of formal learning and VP of business planning and analysis, respectively. As VP of formal learning, Smith will help the Workshop provide a transformative educational experience for preschoolers in formal classrooms and centers across the US using Sesame Street's assets. Her responsibilities include conducting research and analysis to inform strategic direction, coordinating a cross-functional project team to design and launch key programs and securing internal and external support and investment from audiences. Previously, Smith served as assistant commissioner for External Partnerships and Research with the New York State Department of Education. As VP of business planning and analysis, Solanki is responsible for identifying and developing long-term business opportunities and evaluating potential acquisitions and other investments. Facilitating company-wide strategic planning activities and conducting business analysis is also part of her new remit. She most recently served as the director of digital sales strategy and business development at MTV Networks.

**Shine Group** (London, England, 44-207-985-7000): The UK-based indie prodco has appointed former News International, HIT Entertainment and Chorion exec **Lori Heiss** to the newly created position of global brand manager. Starting this month, Heiss will be looking after formulating the ongoing global strategy for Shine Group's proprietary international brands, with a particular focus on the MasterChef brand. Previously senior director of international marketing at HIT Entertainment, Heiss headed up marketing and brand strategy for territories including the UK, EMEA, Asia and Australia and oversaw preschool brands including Thomas & Friends, Bob the Builder and Barney. Prior to that, she was head of marketing, PR and product development at Chorion. Most recently, Heiss headed entertainment, retail and publishing partnerships at News International.

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### Stories that stick

Hello Books, from San Francisco-based Hello Hanna, feature buildable stickers that kids can use to tell their own stories. The kits, priced at US\$10.95, include a 5" x 30" accordion-fold book that serves as a blank slate upon which creative kids can place stickers at will or according to a design template.



### Building box

Ohio-based Build A Dream Playhouses has headed back to the basics with its corrugated cardboard box playhouses that take the shape of cars, kitchens, castles, space shuttles and more. The no-frills approach to play doesn't require adhesive or fasteners and uses black graphics on 100% recyclable white cardboard, allowing kids to decorate the structures with paint, markers and stickers.



### Cuddling up to iPhone

"Can I play with your iPhone?"

It's a question some parents hear every day, which is why Nashville, Tennessee's Griffin Technology and partners ScrollMotion and Iceberg Kids Co-op have developed the Woogie. Soft and huggable, this hybrid stuffed animal/protective case has a starfish-like design that allows for safe play and hands-free viewing and interaction. To complement the plush, the Sesame Street eBook sampler app from Iceberg is included with the Woogie (US\$19.99) or can be downloaded for free at the US iTunes store.

# All eyes on Korean character animations

The Korean character animation industry is receiving the attention of consumers and buyers all over the world. At the MIPCOM, the world's largest content trade show held in October in Cannes, Korean animation Robocar Poli was awarded 1<sup>st</sup> place in the MIP Junior 2010 Licensing Challenge and Korean animation characters at the Shanghai Licensing Pavilion in China also garnered tremendous attention from Chinese buyers.

Along with Australia and Canada, Korea is the only country in the world in which governmental support is provided to the content industry. The Korean government's support to develop the cultural content industry into a national core industry is seen as having contributed to Korean contents' rapid development of competitiveness on the international market and formation of a global industry.

Consequently, character animations that appeal to consumers around the world are continuously being released. Some of the most popular Korean animations are Mashimaro, BackKom, Poong Poong, Marine Blues, iLoveEgg, Puni Culi, and CELTA.



## ◀ Mashimaro

Mashimaro is a cute rabbit of flamboyant character created as flash animation in 2000. Mashimaro is undoubtedly the most popular Korean animated character as sales of Mashimaro products alone bring in 200 billion a year. Mashimaro also has a significant international following, with export taking place to 60 countries including China.



## ◀ Poong Poong

Poong Poong is a character with a habit of passing wind that appears in fun educational programs that develop children's senses, intelligence and creativity.



## ◀ iLoveEgg

iLoveEgg is an egg-shaped character that transforms in myriad of ways to instill imagination in children. It was selected as one of the top 10 animations at the Nicktoon Network Animation Festival.



## ◀ CELTA

CELTA is a unique handmade character that appeals to consumers as no CELTA character is alike. It is continuously being exported to Japan, Taiwan, Russia, New Zealand and Guam.

## ▶ BackKom

BackKom is a 3D animation that was first broadcast in 2006. It is about a polar bear that comes to live in a big city from the North Pole and became a successful TV animation film after being awarded in various international festivals. BackKom is currently exported to 20 countries, including the US, Spain and China and was produced as a feature film for theatrical release last year.



## ▶ Marine Blues

Marine Blues is an online comic featuring personified sea creatures. It features a sea urchin as the main character and a starfish, octopus and turtle as secondary characters. Stories are delivered in a diary-format.



## ▶ Puni Culi

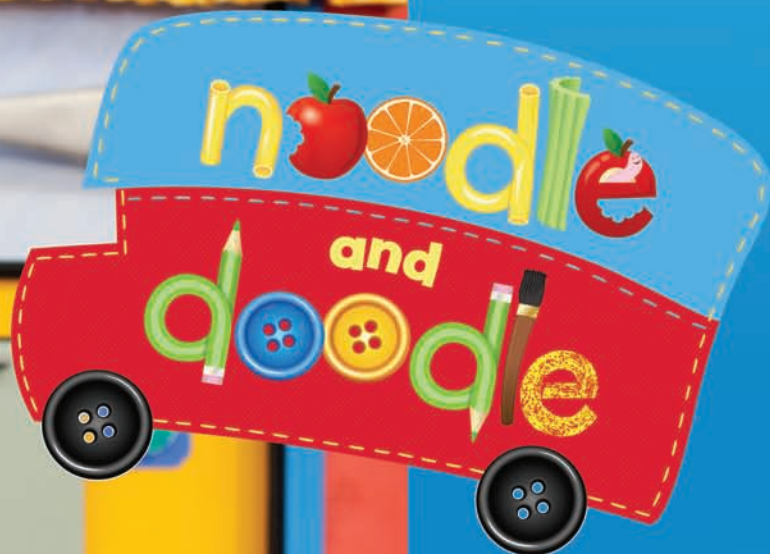
Puni Culi features 2 characters – Puni and Culi – who represent the good and evil sides of people. The human nature is humorously depicted by Puni, who believes that violence is the answer to all hardships, and Culi, a timid character who comes up with a variety of excuses to avoid challenges.



The Korean character animation industry has transcended cultures to deliver engaging stories that are beautifully animated to fans around the world and its future indeed appears to be a promising one.



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